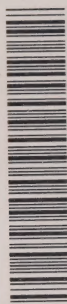
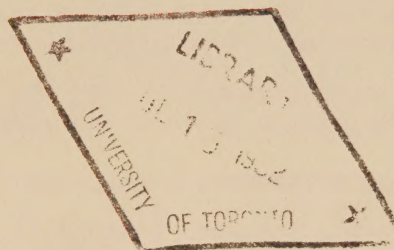


CORRECTIONS ONTARIO:



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Temporary Absence Program

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When Don G. walks out of a small motors manufacturing plant at the end of his shift, his fellow workers don't know that he is on his way to a correctional centre where he is serving a sentence. Don is paying society back for the wrong he committed, but through the Temporary Absence Program he can still help to support his family while he completes his prison term.



Ministry of
Correctional
Services

Honourable Nicholas G. Leluk,
Minister

Glenn R. Thompson,
Deputy Minister

BEING SENTENCED

Don G. is a resident of a small Ontario town. When he began forging his employer's signature on company cheques he worried only about the bills he couldn't pay and the baby his wife was expecting.

The day the police arrested him, he began to realize that he had made his problems worse, not better.

The judge sentenced Don to two years less a day, which meant he would serve his sentence in a provincial institution. A longer sentence would have meant being transferred to one of the federal government's penitentiaries.

The judge also recommended Don for the Temporary Absence Program and said he should get back to work as soon as possible.

WHAT TEMPORARY ABSENCE (TA) MEANS TO AN INMATE

In Don's case, his work history in the community was good prior to the behavior that put him in prison. What he wanted most was a chance to re-establish himself in the community and make sure his wife had at least the basic necessities to look after the baby when it arrived.

A report prepared by Don's parole officer showed that Norma felt a lot of sympathy for the mess Don was in and wanted to help him.

A temporary absence from an institution for work or other reasons like academic upgrading is generally only granted to inmates who have not committed a crime involving violence, brutality or arson; have not trafficked in or are users of drugs; do not have a history of alcoholism; have not committed a sexual offence, and have not escaped or attempted to escape custody.

Every temporary absence application is considered individually, since everyone's circumstances are different. An absence may be approved either with or without an escort (prison staff) or may require regular reporting to the police, or supervision by a probation/parole officer.

APPLYING FOR A TEMPORARY ABSENCE

Don completed his TA application and was told it would be discussed with the staff TA committee. He was applying for a

daily absence, which meant he would go back to the institution after work every day and for weekends.

Because Don had no previous criminal record and was not a known trouble-maker, the local police agreed that he was a suitable TA candidate.

He was given a pass to go and meet his prospective employer and put in a job application.

Don's TA allowed him only to find a job. The conditions included a ban on drinking alcohol, he was not allowed to visit his family, and could not stay away from the institution overnight. If he broke any of the rules covering his TA the privilege would be taken away at once. However, if he established trust, family visiting privileges or other requests would be considered through a new application.

As well as TAs for work and academic upgrading, other types of absences include those for family visits and medical reasons such as a stay in a hospital or a visit to a specialist if it is recommended by the prison physician.

Don got a job.

Under the TA regulations he would pay a portion of his earnings to the institution to cover room and board, a portion would be saved for his release; he would receive cash for his own daily expenses, and the rest could be sent to his wife.

It was Don's responsibility to arrange transportation to and from the institution; he would be provided with a packaged lunch.

If his TA is successful, Don may be awarded parole once he is eligible for a hearing by the Ontario Board of Parole.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRES (CRC)

When Norma came to visit, she shared his feelings that maybe, after all, they would make it through this very bad period.

She also said the parole officer had told her Don might eventually be eligible to live at a community resource centre and asked him to find out what it meant.

In some Ontario towns and cities, the ministry of correctional services funds community resource centres which are operated by local agencies.

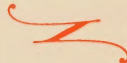
Inmates can apply to be transferred to a CRC, which is similar to a hostel, to finish their sentence.

Applications are very carefully screened to make sure applicants are ready to handle the freedom this brings, although they must return to the centre at night and are not allowed alcohol.

These centres are generally houses renovated to suit group living and to a certain extent the staff act as a substitute family.

Eventually, when Don had shown himself to be responsible and trustworthy in handling the rules of a temporary absence, he was permitted to transfer to a CRC.

Don was eventually granted parole, which meant he could serve the remainder of his sentence under supervision in the community. He could return to his family, but must report to his parole officer before changing either his job or his residence.



INMATES NEED DIFFERENT PROGRAMS

Don's application for a temporary absence was approved because it was felt the program met his needs. Every inmate's needs are judged on an individual basis by trained staff to find out which institutional programs best meet his needs.

The treatment and training programs are aimed at assisting each individual offender to leave the prison at the end of his sentence with a better chance of going straight.

That could mean academic upgrading or improving trade skills. Some men and women have never held any job for long, and prison maintenance work on a daily basis teaches them how to work steadily for set periods of time each day.

Other inmates may need counseling by medical staff, and many benefit from life skills courses, like how to apply for a job, how to open a bank account or rent a room. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings are held in institutions to help those who have had alcohol-related problems.